

SENATOR CHRIS KOSTER

Capitol Report 2008

2008
Legislative
Session:

An Overview

Helping Missouri
Families Living
with Autism

Providing
Quality
Education
for Children

*Senator Koster
with his niece
and nephew,
Claire and Will
Koster, in the
Missouri Senate
chamber*

**Creating Better-
Paying Jobs**

**Honoring a WWII
POW Survivor**



MISSOURI SENATE
SENATOR CHRIS KOSTER
DISTRICT 31

Dear Friends,

On May 16, the Senate concluded the 2008 legislative session. I deeply appreciate the opportunity to serve the people of the 31st District in the upper chamber of the General Assembly. As your voice in Jefferson City, I represent the legislative interests of Cass, Bates, Johnson and Vernon Counties, and I am honored to be in a position where I can help better the quality of life for Missourians.



The 2008 legislative session presented its successes along with its challenges. After many hours of debate, we passed significant illegal immigration legislation that requires businesses to take greater responsibility in documenting the U.S. citizenship of their employees. An economic development measure that will give Missouri's economy a boost and make our state a cutting-edge location for aviation technology was also cleared by the Legislature. Thousands of good-paying union jobs will be created in the Kansas City area because of this bill's passage. We also took great strides in improving the state's services for families living with autism. The exponential increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism demands that we take action.

This newsletter contains information on important issues considered by the Legislature that affect our state and district. If you do not see the information that you need, please contact my Capitol office at (573) 751-1430 and my staff will be happy to help you. Your concerns are important to me, and my door is always open.

Chris Koster

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Sen. Chris Koster Welcomes World War II POW

Nevada, Missouri, Resident One of Oldest Living POW Survivors

This legislative session Sen. Koster welcomed Floyd McComas, one of the country's oldest surviving POWs from World War II, to the Missouri Senate.

McComas, a resident of the 31st District, was born in 1909 and will celebrate his 99th birthday in July. He was drafted into the U.S. Army as a part of the infantry in August 1943 at the age of 34. The following year on June 16, he participated in the Allied landing on Omaha Beach.



On his first day with a new unit, McComas was captured and imprisoned by the Germans on Oct. 4, 1944, at Stalag 7A near Moosburg, Germany. The POW camp was comprised of American, Russian and French soldiers. McComas called the camp "better than he expected" for its above-average treatment of the prisoners, perhaps because at that point in the war the Germans "knew they were going to lose."



McComas recalled how his bunkmate in the camp understood and spoke a little German, a skill that came in handy when a young German guard thought McComas was making fun of him. He wasn't, and told his bunkmate to relay his

message to the guard. The guard relented, but told McComas that if he did it again, he would shoot him. He and his bunkmate would also trade the other prisoners the cigarettes they would receive for bread — cigarettes that McComas estimated were 50 percent sawdust. Every other day, he would work in the town, helping to tear down buildings and working in railroad yards, just to get a hot meal.

"My prison life is up in my head," McComas said. "You can make it good or make it bad. I try to make it good."

McComas was freed by General Patton's Third Army on April 29, 1945. He remembers General Patton driving up to the camp in a Jeep, then ordering his soldiers to pitch tents outside the camp where they would stay for a few days before traveling to France. About one month later, McComas was sent home and subsequently discharged from active duty service on Sept. 9, 1945, as a Private First Class.

McComas spent most of his life living in Kansas City with his wife, Ethel, who he married Nov. 23, 1935, and working as a retail furniture buyer. He still drives and reads the newspaper every day, and enjoys woodworking and collecting state quarters.

"My goal is to collect every state quarter," McComas said.

He was introduced by Sen. Koster to the Missouri Senate on April 16 when the senator presented a Senate Resolution honoring McComas's service. He was also introduced to the House by Rep. Barney Fisher (District 125), who sponsored a House Resolution recognizing McComas as an Outstanding Missourian.

"We are honored to have a true American hero visit the Missouri Senate," Sen. Koster said. "Floyd McComas, like all of our men and women in uniform, sacrificed so much to fight for his country. He deserves our utmost respect and heartfelt thanks."

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Sen. Koster Fights for Military Families

Safeguarding those who serve in our military, Sen. Koster successfully worked to shield military parents from child custody or visitation disputes under certain circumstances by adding an amendment to an omnibus measure, HB 1678, which covers several issues relating to military forces and their families.

Sen. Koster's proposal protects military service men and women from any changes in child visitation or custody arrangements that may result from failing to comply with existing instructions — if the reason for their noncompliance is due to active military service and out-of-state deployment.

"The people who serve our country should not be punished in custodial disputes for simply doing their job," Sen. Koster said. "My amendment protects those who are

temporarily taken outside of our area due to their military service and commitment to our country."

Other provisions in the legislation make it easier for children in military families to start school after moving to Missouri, as well as ease the teacher certification requirements for military spouses. It also makes higher education less of a financial burden for the spouses and children of killed or severely injured soldiers by offering educational grants for tuition at public or private colleges or universities in Missouri.

"Our military knows what it means to truly sacrifice," Sen. Koster said. "This bill is one small way we can say 'thank you' and improve the quality of life for our armed forces and their families."



Sen. Koster and an airman from Whiteman Air Force Base in Knob Noster stand in front of a B-2 stealth bomber. Koster toured the facilities at the base and spent time talking with some of Missouri's service men and women.



Sen. Koster receiving honorary membership in the Military Officers Association of America for the Spirit Chapter at Whiteman Air Force Base. Colonel John Riffle presented Sen. Koster with the honor.

Sen. Koster Fights Crime with New Kidnapping Statute

Protecting the Rights of Parents in Missouri

Sen. Koster effectively fought to add an amendment to a crime bill that creates harsher sentences for parental kidnapping when the child is taken for certain periods of time. SB 714 increases the penalty from a Class D felony to a Class C felony when a parent kidnaps his or her child and detains or conceals the child for 60 to 119 days — increasing the maximum prison sentence to seven years. If the parent kidnaps the child for more than 120

days, the penalty becomes a Class B felony, increasing the maximum sentence to 15 years in prison and requiring the offender to service 85 percent of his or her court-imposed sentence.

"This legislation provides for a punishment befitting the crime," Sen. Koster said. "If a parent abducts a child for an extended period of time, the level of prosecution should be heightened, and the sentence lengthened."

FISCAL YEAR 2009 STATE BUDGET

Creating a state budget by a certain deadline is one of the Legislature's constitutionally mandated responsibilities that it must complete each year. This year lawmakers approved a \$22.4 billion budget, providing, among other things, an additional \$123.3 million to Missouri's public K-12 schools, a funding increase of \$48.7 million to the Access Missouri Scholarship Program, and \$21 million in additional funds for life sciences research.

31ST DISTRICT FUNDING

Operating

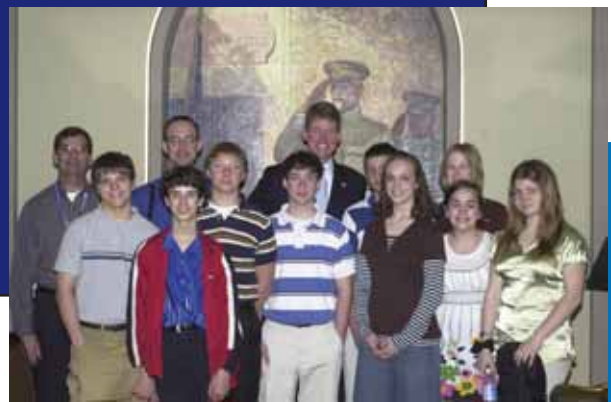
- **\$201.6 million** for School Foundation Formula
- **\$59.7 million** for University of Central Missouri
- **\$718,222** for State Schools for the Severely Handicapped
- **\$150,000** for Warrensburg Innovation Center
- **\$527,142** for Knob Noster State Park
 - **\$10.4 million** for Warrensburg Veterans' Home
- **\$9.7 million** for Nevada Habilitation Center

Capital Improvements

\$140,000 for Department of Natural Resources for Bates County



Matt, a Jefferson City High School student, observes the Senate in action with Sen. Koster.



Students from a Harrisonville school visit the State Capitol on May 1, 2008.

Koster Fights for Health Insurance for Autism

This session Sen. Koster filed Senate Bill 1229, which requires health carriers to provide insurance to children under the age of 21 for the diagnosis and treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder, thereby eliminating any opportunity for insurance discrimination. This bill would ensure that children with autism have access to quality medical care. Sen. Koster made passing this legislation a priority this session, and worked diligently for nonpartisan communication on the issue.

In the United States it is estimated that one in 150 children are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

More children in this country are diagnosed with autism than juvenile diabetes, AIDS and cancer combined. The number of children diagnosed with autism is growing exponentially as a percentage of our population, so it is essential that Missourians educate themselves on the disease as it affects our children and families across the state.

The General Assembly has set aside \$7.4 million in additional funding for autism services in the 2009 fiscal year, ensuring that Missouri families have access to the resources they need.

To find out more about Autism Spectrum Disorder, visit these websites:

Autism Facts Sheet from NIH

www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/autism/detail_autism.htm

Autism Speaks

www.autismspeaks.org

Judevine Center for Autism

www.judevine.org

Autism Society of America

www.autism-society.org

1 in **164** diagnosed with autism in Missouri in 2006

Securing Funding for the Nevada Habilitation Center

Each session the General Assembly works on a state budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Crafting a budget is a numbers game where lawmakers determine how much funding to allocate to state programs, facilities and departments. The Nevada Habilitation Center operated by the Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is one facility that depends on funding from the state in order to continue offering its services to developmentally disabled individuals.

Sen. Koster and his colleagues have allocated \$9.7 million to the facility for FY 2009, ensuring that its doors will stay open to provide developmentally disabled individuals with the help they need to lead their lives. The Nevada Habilitation Center has been home for people with mental illness, mental retardation, and developmental disabilities since 1887. The current Nevada Habilitation Center has been in existence since 1973.

AUTISM IN MISSOURI

Missouri ranks **20th** among the states for highest number of autism cases

4679 autism cases in 2006 in Missouri for ages 3-22 — up from **1723** cases in 2000

1204% cumulative growth rate of autism from 1992 to 2006 in Missouri

21% annual growth rate for autism in 2006 in Missouri — up from **15%** in 2002

Source: www.fightingautism.org



Sen. Koster with Owen Lunn from Nevada who came to the Capitol with the Missouri Planning Council for Developmental Disabilities to support SB 756. The bill would have changed the name of the Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities to the Division of Developmental Disabilities.

Protecting Landowners' Rights

Sen. Koster Fights to Defend Cass County Residents

If you live in Cass County, you're probably familiar with the controversy surrounding the power plant built by Aquila, Inc., in 2004 that violated local zoning laws. Legislation passed this session strikes a compromise in the ongoing battle between the county and the company. It allows Aquila to avoid dismantling the plant, while explicitly stating that landowners have the right to make claims against the company for any damages rendered by its decision to build a power plant without county approval.

Sen. Koster helped protect the rights of Cass County residents by ensuring SB 720 included a provision that offered citizens the opportunity to file suit or make a damages claim in court.

"Aquila clearly violated Cass County landowners' rights when it built its plant without approval," Sen. Koster said. "However, tearing down the plant only to rebuild it in exactly the same spot is an unrealistic course of action. As long as residents are able to seek restitution, this outcome achieves a balance for both sides."

Bringing Quality Jobs to Missouri

Sen. Koster worked hard to support and pass SB 718/HB 2058 to ensure that Missouri will continue to reap the benefits of the Quality Jobs Act. The bill includes a provision that extends and expands the program, which was enacted by the Legislature in 2005 to attract and retain employers by offering tax credits to companies paying workers at least an average county wage, and offering to pay at least 50 percent of the premium for basic health insurance. The measure requires that the program stay in effect through August 2013.

Currently, the Department of Economic Development cannot issue more than \$40 million in tax credits for the Quality Jobs Program per year. The bill increases the cap on the total tax credits issued to \$60 million, helping Missouri employers offer better jobs to hard-working Missourians.

2,100 New High-Paying Manufacturing Jobs

Sen. Koster Works to Incent Airplane Manufacturing Company to KC

Hundreds of new, high-paying jobs in the Kansas City area are now a possibility because of a bill passed by lawmakers this year. Sen. Koster fought to pass HB 2393, a mega-project tax credit plan that allows the state to offer incentives for Bombardier, a Montreal-based company, to bring an airplane assembly plant to the Kansas City region.

The measure entices Bombardier to invest \$400 million into building a passenger jet assembly plant at Kansas City International Airport. Bombardier has confirmed it is considering Kansas City as a possible location to build a passenger jet assembly plant that, when at full capacity, would employ approximately 2,100 workers paying an average wage of \$63,000 annually. These jobs could spur thousands more indirect jobs in the region and state.

The company, which also owns Learjet, would invest a

total of \$3.2 billion in research, development and infrastructure for the project, but is seeking assistance from Kansas City and the state, leading to the development of HB 2393.

The bill expands the Enhanced Enterprise Zone and Quality Jobs Act programs, offering tax credit incentives of up to \$240 million dollars over an 8-year period. The state programs would be coupled with local resources in Kansas City to help bring high-paying jobs and economic growth to Missouri.

Under the plan, Bombardier would be required to repay any tax credits issued by the state. The assembly plant would produce a new, fuel efficient, less costly, 110-plus seat commercial aircraft — making it the first new commercial aircraft assembly facility in the U.S. since 1968 — and allowing Missouri families to benefit from the economic boost.



State Officials Contact Information

Unless otherwise noted, the mailing address for the following officials is:
State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Avenue, Jefferson City, MO 65101

Governor Matt Blunt(573) 751-3222
Lt. Governor Peter Kinder.....(573) 751-4727
Secretary of State Robin Carnahan.....(573) 751-4936
State Auditor Susan Montee.....(573) 751-4824
State Treasurer Sarah Steelman.....(573) 751-2411
Attorney General Jeremiah W. (Jay) Nixon.....(573) 751-3321
Supreme Court Building, 207 W. High Street, Jefferson City, MO 65101
State Senator Chris Koster.....(573) 751-1430
State Representative Shannon Cooper (District 120).....(573) 751-1484
State Representative David Pearce (District 121).....(573) 751-2272
State Representative Michael McGhee (District 122).....(573) 751-1462
State Representative Brian Baker (District 123).....(573) 751-2175
State Representative Luke Scavuzzo (District 124).....(573) 751-4072
State Representative Barney Joe Fisher (District 125).....(573) 751-5388
State Capitol Tours.....(573) 751-2854

State Departments

Department of Agriculture P.O. Box 630, Jefferson City, MO 65102.....(573) 751-4211
Department of Conservation P.O. Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102.....(573) 751-4115
Department of Corrections P.O. Box 236, Jefferson City, MO 65102.....(573) 751-2389
Department of Economic Development P.O. Box 1157, Jefferson City, MO 65102.....(573) 751-4962
Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Education P.O. Box 480, Jefferson City, MO 65102....(573) 751-4212
Department of Health & Senior Services P.O. Box 570, Jefferson City, MO 65102.....(573) 751-6400
Department of Higher Education 3515 Amazonas Dr., Jefferson City, MO 65109.....(573) 751-2361
Dept. of Insurance, Financial Institutions & Prof. Registration P.O. Box 690, Jefferson City, MO 65102 (573) 751-4126
Dept. of Labor & Industrial Relations 3315 W. Truman Blvd., Jefferson City, MO 65109....(573) 751-4091
Department of Mental Health P.O. Box 687, 1706 E. Elm, Jefferson City, MO 65102.....(573) 751-4122
Department of Natural Resources P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, MO 65102.....(573) 751-3443
Department of Public Safety P.O. Box 749, Jefferson City, MO 65102.....(573) 751-4905
Department of Revenue P.O. Box 311, Jefferson City, MO 65105.....(573) 751-4450
Department of Social Services P.O. Box 1527, Jefferson City, MO 65102.....(573) 751-4815
Department of Transportation P.O. Box 270, Jefferson City, MO 65102.....(573) 751-2551
All departments can be accessed through Missouri's state government home page at www.mo.gov

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